

Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 2028

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PDEV, KS, KN

SUBJECT: RED CROSS TALKS -- CONVERSATION WITH CHIEF ROK

DELEGATE YI BUM- SUK

BEGIN SUMMARY: OVER BREAKFAST APRIL 2, AMBASSADOR YI TOLD ME THAT NORTH KOREANS WERE " STIFFER" DURING MARCH 21-22 PLENARY IN PYONGYANG THAN EVER BEFORE. TALKS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY CONTINUE BUT ARE AT AN IMPASSE WHILE NORTH, AS IN COORDINATING COMMITTEE TALKS, DEMANDS DISCUSSION OF POLITICAL SUBJECTS FIRST AND OTHER- WISE STALLS ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES. YI FINDS ROK/ CIA DIRECTOR YI HU- RAK LESS OPTIMISTIC ON S- N DIALOGUE THAN BEFORE. END SUMMARY.

1. AMB YI TOLD ME THAT ALTHOUGH ARRANGEMENTS AND PERSONAL COURTESY WERE BETTER IN PYONGYANG MARCH 21-22 THAN IN PREVIOUS PLENARIES, NORTH KOREANS WERE " STIFFER" ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES. IT IS EVIDENT TO YI THAT CONSISTENT WITH NORTH ' S INSISTENCE IN COORDINATING COMMITTEE THAT MILITARY AND POLITICAL SUBJECTS SHOULD BE TAKEN UP FIRST IN S- N DIALOGUE, NORTH' S INTENTION IS TO ALLOW NO PROGRESS IN REY CROSSTALKS. IN STALLING, NORTH CONTINUED TO DEMAND CHANGE IN ANTI- COMMUNIST AND OTHER ROK LAWS WHICH NORTH ALLEGES SUSTAIN UNACCEPTABLE ENVIRONMENT FOR VISITS OF NORTH KOREANS IN THE SOUTH. YI ANSWERED WITH CITATION OF PROVISIONS OF NORTH KOREAN CONSTITUTION AND SEVERAL LAWS WHICH DECLARE THE INTENTION OF NORTH TO COMMUNIZE ENTIRE PENINSULA.

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2. YI SAID THAT PLENARY SESSIONS CONTINUE TO BE MERE EXCHANGE OF PREPARED STATEMENTS WITH NO FREE GIVE AND TAKE. HE DESCRIBED THREE INCIDENTS WHICH GIVE SOME INSIGHT INTO THE NORTH'S CURRENT COMPORTMENT IN THE TALKS :

A. STRETCHING HIS INSTRUCTIONS, YI AGREED TO NORTH'S PROPOSAL TO ADD VISITS INVOLVING KOREAN RESIDENTS IN JAPAN AS DISCUSSION ITEM SUBJECT TO ITS BEING PLACED UNDER AGENDA ITEM 5. NORTH KOREA'S CHIEF DELEGATE KIM TAE- HUI WAS SURPRISED AND PLEASED. THE NEXT DAY, HOWEVER, KIM DENIED THAT HE HAD AGREED TO INCLUSION OF THE SUBJECT UNDER AGENDA ITEM 5 AND REVIVED DEMAND THAT IT BE ADDED UNDER AGENDA ITEM 1.

B. YI DESCRIBED WITH AMUSEMENT CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THE DATE FOR NEXT PLENARY WAS SET. AFTER KIM HAD ASSURED YI THAT HE HAD COMPLETE FREEDOM OF ACTION AND AUTHORITY WITH RESPECT TO THE TALKS, YI ASKED HIM TO EXERCISE THAT FREEDOM IN AGREEING TO MAY 9 AS DATE FOR NEXT PLENARY. KIM WAS THEN EVASIVE BUT YI PERSISTED AND ONLY ON THE FOLLOWING DAY DID KIM UNDER PRESSURE ACCEPT THE DATE.

C. BEFORE MARCH 21 MEETING, ROKG HAD DECIDED THAT PURSUANT TO SUGGESTION OF AMB YI'S GUIDE DURING PREVIOUS MEETINGS YI WOULD ASK TO MEET WITH ONE OF HIS AUNTS KNOWN TO BE RESIDING IN THE NORTH. NORTH HAD CITED YI'S PREVIOUS DECISION NOT TO MEET HE AUNT AS EVIDENCE THAT SEOUL IS NOT REALLY INTERESTED IN HUMANITARIAN MEETINGS BETWEEN DIVIDED FAMILIES. THIS TIME YI ASKED REPEATEDLY TO SEE THE AUNT BUT NORTH MADE EXCUSES AND AT END OF VISIT DECALRED UNPERSUASIVELY THAT GOVT HAD BEEN UNABLE TO FIND HER. DURING MAY 9-11 VISIT TO SEOUL, SOUTH INTENDS TO SUGGEST MEETINGS BETWEEN THREE MEMBERS OF NORTH'S DELEGATION AND THEIR RELATIVES KNOWN TO BE RESIDING IN SEOUL BUT SUSPECTS THAT NORTH MAY CHANGE THESE THREE BEFORE NEXT MEETING.

3. YI SAID THAT HE IS NOW MANAGING THE RED CROSS TALKS ALMOST COMPLETELY INDEPENDENTLY OF ROK/ CIA. CHONG HONG- CHIN OF ROK/ CIA'S NINTH BUREAU IS ABSORVED WITH COORDINATING COMMITTEE. KANG IN- TOK, ROK/ CIA'S EXPERT ON NORTH KOREA, IS CONSULTED FOR BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH PURPOSES BUT OTHERWISE DOES NOT CONCERN HIMSELF DIRECTLY WITH THE TALKS. YI WON AN IMPORTANT BUREAUCRATIC VICTORY RECENTLY WHEN PRESIDENT PARK SETTLED IN FAVOR OF AMBASSADOR YI A CONFLICT OF VIEWS BETWEEN YI AND ROK / CIA.
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4. YI TOLD ME THAT HE HAS NOW ACCEPTED THAT HE IS IN HIS PRESENT ASSIGNMENT FOR THE LONG HAUL. THIS FOLLOWED PRESIDENT PARK' S REJECTION LAST MONTH OF A PROPOSAL BY CHUNG IL- KWON THAT YI RUN FOR THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON GROUND THAT YI WAS NEEDED INSTEAD FOR RED CROSS TALKS AND THE ENCOURAGEMENT HE HAS RECEIVED FROM RUNNING THE TALKS MORE INDEPENDENT OF ROK/ CIA.

5. YI FINDS, AS I HAVE, THAT YI HU RAK IS LESS OPTIMISTIC REGARDING THE SOUTH- NORTH DIALOGUE AND EVEN SEEMS SOMEWHAT DEPRESSED ABOUT THEM. YI CONFIRMED THAT YI HU- RAK IS UNDER TREMENDOUS PRESSURE WITH RESPECT TO THE TALKS BOTH FROM THOSE WHO ARE SKEPTICAL AND FROM THOSE OPPOSED TO YI IN THE ROK ESTABLISHMENT IN- FIGHTING.
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